

Parenting Seminar: 7 pm, Thursday, Jan 14 Monitoring the Internet: Facebook, YouTube, Web Safety

The News Digest

Update: Property

We have made an offer to purchase that was accepted, and we are now in the process of completing our "due diligence." Stay tuned! We hope to make a public announcement before the end of the month.

Update: Capital Campaign Highlighting Alum Families of Leo Milmet and Sabrina Brogniart

A combined gift of more than \$2,000.00 was given by Sarah Milmet, Leo's mom, and Ai-Ling and Eric Brogniart, Sabrina's parents. Due to economics and relocations, Leo and Sabrina are not currently enrolled at Steppingstone. However, they visit when possible, and we try to stay in touch with them and their families.

This is an example of understanding the need for the Steppingstone program and the Akaba educational model to be sustained through these tough economic times. While these families no longer benefit directly by having children attend Steppingstone, they have donated monies to the Capital Campaign because they believe that what we provide for gifted children is important.

While the building is important for housing the Steppingstone School, these donations exemplify "giving back" to the community of gifted Steppingstone students by continuing to support the work that we do. It is inspiring to those of us who are doing the work, and we take this opportunity to thank them and others of you whose donations continue to arrive on Sandy Blay's desk.

Why Homework?

A note from assistant head of school Tom Herbst

Accomplished adults often cite "self-discipline" as one of the attributes that enabled them to reach their goals. Beginning early in the formal education process—no matter what the challenge or task—the ability to prioritize, assess and access available resources, and develop timely solutions is critical. The cultivation of these life-long skills will be critical to continued school, and by extension, personal accomplishment.

For some, attaining these objectives can be littered with obstacles and false starts. As educators and parents, we must supply our youth with the tools they will need to manage these challenges. As in all educational endeavors, home and school need to work together to help children maximize potential.

Going beyond guiding our students through the class curriculum, a school's structured program of age-appropriate homework can instill discipline, cultivate strong study skills, and reinforce concepts learned in class. Youngsters need to know that learning should not end when the dismissal bell rings and that there exists extension into their lives. As a force throughout one's academic career, homework supplements classroom instruction, reinforcing the learning process when a student is out of a teacher's supervision. Simply, self-study accelerates one's growth as a responsible and self-disciplined individual.

Parents, educators, and students each have a responsibility in these matters. This educational partnership is among the most important affiliations into which we will enter. The stakes are indeed high, yet the ultimate results make this commitment truly worthwhile. As we return to the formal learning process in a new calendar year, a recommitment to helping our children understand and focus themselves in the acquisition of appropriate study habits—for their own sakes—must be a priority.

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- Page 1 Kiyo tells us about more donations from the Steppingstone family, in **Update: Capital Campaign**
- Page 2 Mrs. Powell writes about the Early Elementary exercise program, in **Getting Physical**
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- Page 2 Mrs. Hoff writes about **A Teachable Moment**
- Page 2 **Thank You for the Holiday Gifts!**
- Page 2 The PHS studies **Athens and Sparta**
- Page 2 We all suffer from it, but it does cause problems. Read about **Sleep Deprivation**
- Page 2 Wondering when we close? Read **School Closings: Snow Days**
- Page 3 We have a **Swim Reminder** for you
- Page 3 **Outerwear Needed**; this should be painfully obvious, but still.
- Page 3 Wonder about the homework? Read **Homework: At-Home Assignments vs. Assignments To Complete At-Home**
- Page 3 With all the studies, there isn't always time for a huge pile of **Extra-Curricular Activities**
- Page 3 **Congratulations: Raffle Winners**
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S.P.A.R.C. PRESENTS:



Social Networking: Monitoring Children on the Internet

A FREE SEMINAR

Thursday, January 14, 2010

7 PM – Steppingstone Commons

Q & A session to follow

PRESENTER: Mr. William Drake is president of DrakeTec (paperless record systems) and an IT specialist. His topics will include monitoring children on the Internet, Facebook, YouTube, and Web safety.

Steppingstone is an independent state-approved 501(c)(3) non-profit elementary school (K-8) for gifted students. Steppingstone does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, gender, religion, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of any school policy or program.

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STEPPINGSTONE

STEPPINGSTONE SCHOOL FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

NEWSLETTER
Vol. 29 No. 17
January 7, 2010

Parenting Seminar: 7 pm, Thursday, Jan 14 Monitoring the Internet: Facebook, YouTube, Web Safety

Upcoming Events ...

WED, Jan 13
12:30 pm, Spirit Day Lunch
1:00 pm, Spirit Day Assembly

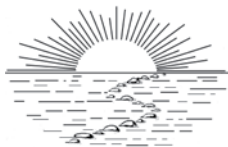
THURS, Jan 14
1:45 pm, Swim-1
7:00 pm, Social Networking:
Monitoring Children on the Internet

MON, Jan 18
NO SCHOOL—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Deadline: Fridays, one week prior to Thursday publication dates.

Email articles to:
jroder@steppingstoneschool.org

cc:
therbst@steppingstoneschool.org



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28555 Middlebelt Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
Phone: 248.539.1666
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www.steppingstoneschool.org



Introducing the newest member of the Thomas (and Steppingstone) family, John Walter Thomas! John was born at 10:44 am on December 25th. He is 7 lbs., 8 oz. and 20.5 inches long! Congratulations, Amanda and Matt! (Amanda is a semi-retired teacher of the Upper Elementary)

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Update: Capital Campaign

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Getting Physical

Ms. Powell, Early Elementary

This time of year it is a little tricky going outside for physical education. One day, it rains; and the next, it is like fall. When it is "ok" to go outside, you might see us running our laps or standing in a circle. Circle games, as they are called, are important in the Early Elementary P.E. class. Students can develop their social skills and social competence when playing Duck, Duck, Goose. They are no longer quiet when they run around a circle trying to be the first one to sit down.

Singing songs is important too. Music helps students connect the movement of the outer world with their feelings and observations. This can simply be done by changing the words to the "Hokey Pokey." Children can get silly, and yet they are working on fine-motor skills as well as gross-motor skills. Many of our games are "shared knowledge;" not everyone knows all the games or songs. Combining creative movement with music helps expand the imagination, too.

Outdoor play helps build large-muscles, and cross-lateral movement helps when children return to the classroom. Learning to contribute during cooperative play helps children learn how to solve problems. Try it yourself! Get up; get moving; and get physical!

Can You Hear Me Now?

Ms. Schultz, Intermediate Elementary

So far in our science unit, students have observed and demonstrated that sounds are caused by vibrations. Our next lesson will help students to discover a related aspect of sound: not only do vibrations cause sound, but sound vibrations in the air can cause objects that they strike to vibrate, in turn.

To help prepare your child for this lesson, discuss the effects of sound on a person's eardrums over time. Ask what s/he already knows about hearing relative to one's age. Brainstorm with your child what it might be like not to be able to hear, and challenge your child to think of why it is important to take good care of his or her ears.

A Teachable Moment

Mrs. Hoff, Upper Elementary

It is every teacher's desire to connect learning to students' everyday world. It is my desire always to be aware of my lesson plans for the day while remaining flexible and receptive to what is going on in the classroom or on the field among my students. I was rewarded a few weeks ago with what I like to call a "teachable moment."

During physical education class one day, the students were having a very difficult time working cooperatively during a game of Capture the Flag. As a teacher, I believe that students need to learn to become self-governing and work out minor conflicts among themselves without my intervention. On this particular day, it became very clear to me that the bickering and arguing needed adult intervention. As a result, physical education class was cut short, and we all moved back into the classroom. On their own, the students all decided that we needed to write an Upper Elementary Constitution and create a classroom flag!

By the time you read this, we will have written and ratified our Upper Elementary Preamble and Bill of Rights. Members of the classroom have even been censured for disrupting the process. The teacher has cast a vote in times of a tie. Ann Thomas was voted by her classmates to pen the Constitution. The classroom flag is blue, purple, red, and yellow; and sixteen stars, each with a picture and name of the individual, represent each student plus the teacher. The flag proudly hangs on our classroom wall next to the American flag.

Self-government is becoming a reality for the Upper Elementary students.

(This is an example of application of knowledge—social studies applied to classroom dynamics.)

Thank You for the Holiday Gifts!

There was at least one Holiday Gift without identification; therefore, we were unable to send an individual "thank you." Please let us know if you are the giver of the huge fruit and snack basket and accept our "thank you" at this time.

Athens and Sparta

Ms. Morse, Pre High School

As we continue through the Social Studies curriculum, the PHS class will learn more about the two city-states, Athens and Sparta. Prior to Winter Break, the students learned that Ancient Greece's cities were really not cities like we know them to be. They were more like states because they each had different forms of government, methods of government, education methods, and money systems. This week, students will learn what the similarities and differences were between Athens and Sparta.

While learning about Athens and Sparta, students will be creating a diorama that shows a day in the life of a citizen of each city. They will create scenes that show how each city-state dealt with education, government, economy, slaves, and the treatment of women. After learning about each city-state, students will make a decision about which one they would have preferred to live in.

Sleep Deprivation

We are dealing with a generation of children suffering from sleep deprivation. In the "old days," children went to bed around 7:30 pm and arose at a similar time. They got physical exercise through outdoor play after school and slept through the night because they were physically and intellectually tired.

These days, both parents often work outside the home, and the family as a whole gets to bed later and awakes earlier to an alarm clock. The National Sleep Council recommends ten hours of sleep for growing children, and especially for adolescents. Parents, review the sleep patterns of your child and adjust your schedules to maximize your child's sleep and also maximize his/her learning. A sleep-deprived student is an inefficient student. It takes longer to learn, longer to complete assignments, and more practice to remember.

School Closings: Snow Days

We close with Farmington schools for inclement weather—snow days. Please check radio and TV listings and be encouraged to stay home if you feel driving is unsafe where you live.



Swim Reminder

Departure from Steppingstone: @ 1:45 pm. If your child will not be swimming, parents, you must pick up your student at 1:00 pm. If your child does not have his/her swimming suit, or a booster seat (children under the age of 8), you will need to bring the suit or booster to school and/or pick up your child. At the pool we have found that we cannot safely supervise students who are not swimming, and there will be no student supervisory staff available at school.

Pickup will be from the Costick Center, door B, at 4:00 pm. We are usually done a little earlier: approximately 3:30. If your child is in extended day, she or he will be assigned to a returning car pool.

If you are curious about how we handle the boy's locker room, Dr. Morse has handled it for many years for Ms. Powell's students who are too short to reach the handles. He turns showers ON and OFF, helps with difficult clothing, and makes sure that all belongings get packed into the right bags. He also maintains order and appropriate behavior and ensures that the boys do not loiter in the locker room.

Your child may appreciate an extra snack in his/her lunch. Swimming burns a lot of calories, and 4:00 pm is many hours after lunch. To review other details, please refer to your 12-10-09 newsletter.

Outerwear Needed

Please send children to school with waterproof boots, insulated jackets, hats, gloves, and snowpants. We go outdoors for recess every day.

Homework: At-Home Assignments vs. Assignments To Complete At-Home

Parents, with the start of the New Year and return to school, it seemed like a good time to review at-home assignments (five to ten minutes) vs. assignments completed at-home (15 minutes to two hours). The amount of homework to expect is dependent on the age of the student and the classroom (see: Parent-Student Handbook).

It is important that parents and students have realistic expectation.: Students should not expect to be able to finish all assignments at school even if s/he is an efficient and effective worker. A minimum of 15 minutes of homework should be expected every night.

It is especially important that parents not communicate an expectation for their child to have no homework. Expecting your child to finish all assignments at school before the end of the day is unrealistic and will create unnecessary stress, especially if your child has perfectionist tendencies.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Related to the amount of homework your child can expect, parents, is the amount of extra-curricular activities that it is reasonable to plan for your child. If your child were in a traditional school, s/he could expect to complete all assignments at school, and it might be reasonable to schedule extra-curricular activities after school. However, since your child attends Steppingstone, more than one or two hours of extra-curricular activities per week is unreasonable if you want your child to maximize his/her learning.

One thing to keep in mind is the learning pace of the gifted child. For instance, a gifted child will just learn faster and hone skills more quickly if not exposed to a particular activity at a young age. In the case of sports, a delayed introduction and a less intense participation can contribute toward the prevention of sports injuries and the potential for greater and lasting success in the future. We have had direct experience, for instance, with talented young gymnasts and skaters who suffered injuries that prevented them from reaching high levels of success in their older adolescence.

Congratulations: Raffle Winners Rich Houdek, Marc Baker, and Jeff Learned

At the Winterfest on the evening of December 18, 2009, tickets were drawn for this year's raffle by RYAN LEARNED. Ryan is a grade five student in Mrs. Hoff's Upper Elementary classroom, and he was the individual student "highest sales" winner. Thanks to Ryan and other excellent sales persons, the Upper Elementary also won the Pizza Party for the class with the highest sales earlier in the month. Ryan sold 63 tickets.

The winners of the raffle drawing were:

1st Prize: RICHARD HOUDEK

Mr. Houdek has a grade seven student, Evan, in Ms. Morse's Pre-High School classroom. The Houdeks will be enjoying 4th of July week in a two-bedroom condo at the Marriott Royal Palms Resort in Orlando. Also included will be four one-day park hopper passes to Walt Disney World Parks.

2nd Prize: JOSH BAKER

Mr. Baker is the uncle of grade four student, Lea, in Mrs. Hoff's Upper Elementary classroom. Mr. Baker resides in New Orleans and purchased his winning ticket after a long-distance phone call from Lea. He was the lucky winner of a \$250 Twelve Oaks Mall gift card. Grandma plans to shop for him.

3rd Prize: JEFF LEARNED

Mr. Learned was the happy winner of a \$100 gasoline gift card, thanks to Mr. Rich Houdek who first won this with another of his tickets. Rich graciously returned this prize to the bowl and gave all the ticket purchasers a second chance to win this prize. Jeff was the happy winner of this second-chance drawing.

Better luck next year to the rest of you who so generously purchased and sold raffle tickets this year! Your efforts were greatly appreciated. This fund-raiser will be added to the 2009-10 Capital Campaign, which has raised a total of \$22,795 at this time.



Social Networking: Monitoring Children on the Internet

A Parent Support Seminar
Thursday, January 14th, at 7:00 pm

IT specialist, Bill Drake (president of DrakeTec paperless record systems), will talk to parents about Facebook, YouTube, web safety, and monitoring children on the Internet. There will also be a Q & A afterward.

Cranbrook Institute of Science Field Trip

Activities and How They Enrich the Curriculum:

Intermediate and Upper Elementary students will explore the Cranbrook Institute of Science Museum. In addition, Intermediate students will participate in presentations about the First Americans, where authentic artifacts and hands-on activities will bring what they are learning in the classroom to life as the students explore how Native Americans interacted with the natural world to meet their daily needs. Upper Elementary students will participate in a presentation about the Worlds of Weather, where students explore climate and weather related questions and connect what they are learning in the classroom with Earth as a part of the solar system.

Date: Monday, February 1, 2010

Time: 9:15 am – 12:30 pm

Departure: 9:15 am

Return: approximately 12:30 pm

Contact Person(s): JaNelle Schultz/Linda Hoff
Phone: 248-539-1666

Address: 39221 Woodward Avenue, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0801

Directions: Middlebelt north to 13 Mile, east to Woodward, north to just north of Lone Pine Road. Cranbrook entrance will be located on the west side of Woodward.

Apparel: Appropriate school attire

Lunch: Students will return to school to eat lunch at Steppingstone

of drivers: 8

of seatbelts: 11 Intermediate students in booster car seats and 15 Upper Elementary students

Why Homework?

A note from assistant head of school Tom Herbst

Accomplished adults often cite “self-discipline” as one of the attributes that enabled them to reach their goals. Beginning early in the formal education process—no matter what the challenge or task—the ability to prioritize, assess and access available resources, and develop timely solutions is critical. The cultivation of these life-long skills will be critical to continued school, and by extension, personal accomplishment.

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Going beyond guiding our students through the class curriculum, a school’s structured program of age-appropriate homework can instill discipline, cultivate strong study skills, and reinforce concepts learned in class. Youngsters need to know that learning should not end when the dismissal bell rings and that there exists extension into their lives. As a force throughout one’s academic career, homework supplements classroom instruction, reinforcing the learning process when a student is out of a teacher’s supervision. Simply, self-study accelerates one’s growth as a responsible and self-disciplined individual.

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ADMINISTRATION

Head of School	Kiyo Morse
Assistant Head	Thomas Herbst
Admissions Director	Donna Coffin
Special Programs Director, & Office Manager	Sandra Blay
Business and Facilities Manager	

STAFF

General Assistant, IT Specialist	Jason Roder
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FACULTY

Early Elementary	Carol Powell
Intermediate Elementary	Janelle Schultz
Upper Elementary	Linda Hoff
Pre High School, Faculty Chair	Keiko Morse

AIMS/TSC Representative	Carol Powell
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INSTRUCTORS

Art	Mary Gage
Japanese	Mieko West
Spanish	Ana Maria Gonzalez

Mandarin Chinese	Hong Lin
Computer	Dr. Reef Morse
Extended Day	Mary Gage
Fencing	Jerzy Radz
Performing Arts	Kathy Nellett

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Vice President	Tom Collins
Secretary	Susan Sheth
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